

April 9. 1854 } Lease 150
C. C. Van Deventer }

E 458

.2

.C19

Copy 1

The Light in the Clouds.

A THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE.

1862.

The Light in the Clouds.

A

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNITED CONGREGATIONS OF THE

Reformed Dutch, First Presbyterian and Westminster
Churches, of Utica, N. Y.

NOVEMBER 27, 1862,

In the Reformed Dutch Church,

BY *Sammel* S. M. *in*CAMPBELL,

PASTOR OF WESTMINSTER CHURCH.



UTICA, N. Y.

CURTISS & WHITE, PRINTERS, 171 GENESEE STREET.

1862.

E 458

. C 19

252906

18

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E .

UTICA, NOVEMBER 28, 1862.

REV. S. M. CAMPBELL:

DEAR SIR: The undersigned, in common with the large audience that were assembled at the Reformed Dutch Church yesterday, listened with unmingled satisfaction to the Discourse pronounced by you on that occasion. They believe its publication would be both useful and interesting, and respectfully solicit a copy for that purpose. By furnishing it for publication, you will confer a benefit on the public, and afford us personally much gratification.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

WM. J. BACON,
T. R. WALKER,
J. E. WARNER,
E. A. WETMORE,
G. A. FOSTER,
J. S. PECKHAM,
LEWIS LAWRENCE,
C. HURLBURT,
M. M. BAGG.

HON. W. J. BACON, T. R. WALKER, ESQ., J. E. WARNER, ESQ., AND OTHERS:

GENTLEMEN: The Discourse which you ask for is at your disposal. If, when printed, it shall have the effect of making any one see more clearly the hand of God in our present national struggle, and of deepening the impression that we are to be regenerated and not destroyed by the visitation, I shall not regret that I have permitted it to go before the public in this form.

Very sincerely,

S. M. CAMPBELL.

UTICA, Dec. 4, 1862.

DISCOURSE.

JOB XXXVII: 21, 22.

And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth them. Fair weather cometh out of the north.

The picture before us in the opening of this passage is one of gloom. The sky is curtained with heavy vapors, the landscape is darkened, and people are everywhere chilled and depressed. And although the sun is shining *upon* the clouds, and perhaps an occasional beam of light pierces through and reaches the earth, no one seems to observe the token or to gather from it any hope.

Before the day ends, however, the scene changes. The wind passeth over the clouds and cleanseth them, or cleareth them away. Fair weather, or as the Hebrew has it, a golden sky, appears in the north, rapidly enlarging till the remnants of mist that still linger along the horizon are wreathed into garlands to beautify the scene.

Such a picture, in some respects at least, may serve to illustrate the condition of the public mind on the recurrence of this annual festival. In the language of the Proclamation which brings us together, it is "from the depths of National affliction" that we come "to own our dependence upon the Most High." And the year for which we are to-day to offer thanks and praise, has been one "fraught with the heaviest sorrows," one to be "numbered among the dark periods of history," and one whose sad "record has been graven on many hearth-stones."

It is a gloomy day for our land; and if there be any "bright light" in the clouds that hang over us, very many do not yet behold it. War is upon us in its most terrible form. And from the most opposite points of view, men are predicting that the contest will close as unhappily as it began. The rebellion never

will be subdued, they say. There is imminent danger even of another rebellion in the hitherto loyal sections of the land.

It is a happy thing that at such a time we should be called upon to set apart a day for Thanksgiving and Praise to Almighty God. Luther used to say, when things looked dark around him, and poor Melancthon was turning pale, "Come let us sing the 46th Psalm :

"God is our refuge, ever near,
Our help in tribulation ;
Therefore, His people will not fear,
Amid a wrecked creation."

And Paul and Silas, in their midnight imprisonment cheered their hearts in the same way. So let us sing our song to-day ; taking, if possible, some cheerful view of the present state of affairs, and if there be any bright light in the clouds, or any prospect of fair weather, lifting up our eyes to behold it. We shall find some things to be thankful for, I think, even in such a time as this ; and a little cheerful thought will both please God and strengthen our righteous cause.

I. At the foundation of all encouraging reflection at such a time as this, we must settle well in our minds the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God. We must call up from His book that half-forgotten or half-understood declaration, that He "worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will." And when we hear our Savior saying that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered," we must at least compel ourselves to believe that God is not indifferent to the spectacle when a great nation is struggling for life. The affairs of our country are in the hands of the Lord. And when we have reached a thorough conviction of that truth, we shall see a bright light in the clouds.

Such a conviction is more easily attained now than in ordinary times. When affairs glide on smoothly, and cause and effect, like two wheels, well matched and well oiled, play quietly into each other, men grow skeptical. They conceive a high regard for nature and for human development, but they doubt whether God interposes in any of our affairs. In such times as these, however, the steady continuity of things is broken in upon. Forces suddenly spring up, of which no one had any conception, and they play upon society in tornadoes and hurricanes. "The wind blow-

eth where it listeth, and thou heareth the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." There is just that mystery, and just that majesty, and just that almightiness in the present course of events, which we naturally ascribe directly to God.

Moreover, God is economical of His agencies, so that when He inaugurates so great a disturbance of public affairs as we now observe, we may conclude that He is about to accomplish some very important result. You will observe it among the miracles recorded in Scripture, that the supernatural agency is never introduced to effect anything which could be done by common means, and that it is never wrought up one degree higher, or pushed one degree further than is necessary. Nor can we conceive it of God, without derogation to His character, that He should shake the earth and tempest the sea, as He is doing now, for any trifling purpose or insignificant design. Thus, in the very magnitude of the struggle which convulses this nation, we have a token, as soon as we come fairly to see God's hand in it, that there will be comfort and joy in the end. * These great armies that confront each other, these implements of war that hurl their missiles like the thunderbolts of the gods, this iron-clad armament that pushes its way up our rivers and sweeps along our coast,—these have been called into existence, and are being wielded for a divine purpose. There is a divine argument in this war, adjusted to those great moral issues which are involved in it. There has been a divine handling of the elements of this Titanic strife, God coming out into the foreground, riveting our astonished gaze, and more than once making this whole land to feel that He held us in His grasp.

Here then, is one "bright light" on these clouds. Never was there a clearer case since the days of miracles, of the special interposition of the divine Providence, than this of our land. And the magnitude of those agencies which God is here wielding are such as foreshadow a new chapter in our history, if not a new cycle in the history of mankind. "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints!"

II. Although God has deeply afflicted us, He has done it in such a way as to indicate a purpose not to destroy us. It becomes us indeed, to speak modestly on this point; and yet there are cer-

tain leading features of this national trouble which assuredly do not look like mere retribution.

1. It may be said, I think, without the least partisan feeling, and without much danger of exciting partisan feeling, that God has shown His kind purposes toward us, by placing at the head of our nation, at such a critical period, so just and good a man. For, so far as I know, whether it be among those who complain that the war now upon us has been too feebly conducted, or among those who believe that rash and unadvised measures have been adopted, there is but one opinion as to the *personally* honest purpose and sincere patriotism of the present incumbent of the Presidential chair. And it is the pronounced judgment of this nation to-day, that as Abraham Lincoln went into office with a reputation for singular integrity, so has he maintained himself above all just suspicion of corrupt dealing or design. He may not be thought a great man, or a fast man, or a polished man, or a handsome man, but the people do believe that he is an honest man.

Now, this is a circumstance that speaks loudly of the kind purpose of God. We have been passing through a most critical period; one of those periods which give large opportunity to ambitious usurpers. The people have been generous. They have been ready to offer not only their means and their efforts to sustain this government, but what has been more, to hold in abeyance for the time being, their own dearest civil rights. They have by their representatives placed in the hands of the Chief Magistrate almost despotic power; and had they been seized with any strong suspicion against his loyalty, there have been times when they would have hailed with acclamations the Napoleon, or the Caesar, or the Cromwell, who would have hurled him down from his seat, and have carried the nation to victory over everything like constitution and laws. It has been the very salvation of our country that we have had at its head in these times, a man who, as he would not betray the trust imposed in him, so he has retained the confidence of the people even in their greatest impatience.

I know indeed, that a man may be honest and yet be ill-advised. But sheer honesty is often of itself a good adviser. "*The integrity of the upright shall guide them.*" I know also, that a man may be honest and yet be feeble; nay, that he may be so over-careful not to do wrong as to create a wrong on the other side. But when the public men of this nation make any mistakes in that

way, I think that we ought to be very patient with them. It would be a rare thing, I am sure, to see a man at Washington, occupying an important office, who was over-careful not to do wrong.

And that feeble character which some are disposed to assign to the Chief Magistrate whom God has set to guide us through this storm, is something which history will certainly dispel. President Lincoln may be very slow, but when he does bring down his long arm, it reaches a great way. And that noble address of his to the Border State men, and that Proclamation of his which takes effect on the 1st day of January next, will stand to his honor when many a more polished state paper will have been consigned to a well merited oblivion.

Now I say that if God had intended to have this nation perish in its present trouble, it does not seem as if He would have placed just such a man at the head of it, at just this juncture. And I bespeak here once for all, your confidence in, and your prayers to God for him, who bears upon his brawny shoulders the whole weight of this great nation, and who has perhaps "come to the kingdom for such a time as this."

2. God has delivered us so many times from imminent peril since these troubles began, as to indicate a kind purpose toward us. We must, when we think of the history of the past two years at least conclude that our nation has not yet sinned beyond forgiveness. We must see that God waits yet to be gracious, if no more; and that although the stroke may fall by and by which shall destroy us, there is room for repentance yet. Nay, we can scarcely fail to see more, for it does seem unaccountable that God should have interposed every time that we have been in great peril and have brought us deliverance, unless he intends to bring us to repentance, and so unto a national salvation.

Observe some of these deliverances. I suppose that no one now doubts that there was imminent danger at the very inauguration of the present Chief Magistrate, that the government would be broken up. To assassinate the President elect, and to seize the Capitol, and before the people could rally, to take from them their only national rallying point and constitutional leader, were but single items in that dark conspiracy which was there and then to be consummated. And in the circumstances, it seems marvellous that it was thwarted. On the 4th day of March, 1861, this

great Republic had its grave all dug, and it was only because God thwarted the counsels of the wicked men engaged in the scheme that it was not hopelessly buried.

At a little later day, the same thing was nigh being accomplished in another way. None of us need be reminded of the massacre of our troops in Baltimore, and of the manner in which our men afterward crept round through by-ways and obscure routes to reach the Capital; and how at that very time the rebel flag was flying in sight of Washington, and rebel batteries were planted on the heights, within shelling distance of the Presidential mansion. It makes one's cheek tingle to recount these things, and excites a feeling that perhaps Christians ought not to cherish. But God did not leave us under this humiliation. It was not long before Baltimore found a ruler, nor long before our forces crossed the Long Bridge. The first forward movement cost us the life of Col. Ellsworth; but in his foul assassination we saw only a type of the fate which had been prepared for the Republic itself.

Then came that terrible disaster at Manassas, when the whole army that we had gathered was virtually annihilated; and God saved us even out of that. Then appeared that leviathan of naval architecture at Hampton Roads, tossing off the cannon balls from its sides like pebbles, crushing through our frigates, and sending a wave of alarm to our utmost sea-ports; and God saved us out of that. Then came the retreat of our wasted, broken columns from the Peninsula; then demonstrations on Cincinnati and Louisville; then the actual invasion of Pennsylvania and Maryland. But time fails me, and I close the tremendous catalogue by once more saying, out of all this the Lord delivered us. Yes, every time the crisis came, He was there; sometimes saving us in such ways that positively we could see nothing else but God in it, and keeping us "alive as we are this day!" Why, it seems to me as if it could scarcely have been made plainer by a voice from Heaven, that God loves this nation and means to take care of it, than it is by the repeated voice of these astonishing deliverances! And if the people of this land, after all that has occurred, can not find in the bare reflection that we have a national existence yet, and are not carved up among foreign powers like Poland, or buried alive like Hungary, or blotted out like Babylon, a reason for thanksgiving and praise to Almighty God, they must be utterly insensible. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out."

3. In spite of all our discouragements and reverses, God has wonderfully strengthened and prospered us against our enemies.

I know that there are those who can not see that our arms have upon the whole been successful in this war; but such persons are laboring under a very unnecessary delusion. We have had a brave enemy to fight, for they have been themselves Americans. And what was greatly to our disadvantage, it took us a long time to learn that they were brave. But we have found it out at last, and they probably have made a similar discovery with respect to ourselves. And when I think what a condition this government was in, for anything like a military struggle when this rebellion was precipitated upon us, I am filled with amazement, that against such an enemy we should have accomplished so much as we have.

At the time these troubles began, this nation lay water-logged in the mad waves. What little army we had—not more than three or four times as many men as this one county has sent to the war—was cut up into small detachments, and was mostly scattered along the frontier, and was officered by men, half of whom stood ready to pull down the flag under which they had won all their glory. Our navy—if so pitiful a show of armed ships could be called a navy—was nearly all in foreign seas, and when it should come back, each officer would have to be questioned before we could know whether he was for us or against us. And as for the treasury, what little there had been in it had mysteriously disappeared, and the government had just been out begging for a little money, which it was glad to get by paying twelve per cent. per annum. There were traitors in the national Congress, and traitors in the Supreme Court, and traitors in the Cabinet, and traitors everywhere. And this imperial Republic, like the man that went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, lay exposed by the way-side, stripped and wounded and more than half dead, and no good Samaritan came by to take it to an inn, to pour oil upon its wounds, or to give so much as “two pence” to save its life.

Now, starting from that point, measure if you can, the distance we have come to bring us where we are to-day. Almost a million of men stand armed to enforce the behests of the government, and, till quite recently, every one of these men a volunteer. A navy has been created, that France and England both have looked on to study. And both army and navy are magnificently equipped and well officered; while our treasury, which pays out its

million a day, is replenished by the quick sale of its seven per cents. at a handsome premium.

But some one will inquire what good there is in all this after all, unless we gain some victories over the rebellion? Material will never save us unless we use it. To which I reply, it has been used with the most signal results. Perhaps more might have been accomplished, but that is no reason for closing our eyes against what has really been done.

Most of you have heard of a *little place* down at the mouth of the Mississippi, called New Orleans. In 1812 the British navy tried a hand at capturing the town. And one Andrew Jackson, with a few raw troops, part of them negroes, and a breastwork of cotton-bags, held it in spite of all they could do. Just fifty years later, the same place, fortified by the most scientific works, and garrisoned by a force of brave men, is taken by our arms, at a time when half the power of the nation had been lost by rebellion. And although it was said that the place could never be governed if it was taken, it is generally allowed at the present day that New Orleans *is governed*. I do not know exactly how large a place Sebastopol is, nor how well it was fortified against the attack that was made upon it a few years ago. But I do know that it took England, and France, and Sardinia united, a year and a half to reduce one-half of that town, while our own nation, with one hand tied, reduced New Orleans, after everything was ready, in less than three days. And when the present popular impatience shall have subsided, and a calm historic view of the events now transpiring shall be taken, the conquest of the one great city of New Orleans—and the governing of it, which I esteem equally a marvel—will be sufficient alone to crown our arms with glory.

But certainly we need not dwell on this one event long. Others like it rush upon the mind; and above the great heart-wail of this nation, the victory-shout is sounding down the year. Island Number Ten, away on the far Mississippi, lifts up its voice, and Roanoke amid her storms and sands and billows answers it. Port Royal thunders out her anthem, and the echo comes back from Fort Donaldson. And Corinth, and Pea Ridge, and Newbern, and Fort Henry, and Antietam, and a host of other names, join the chorus of high praise to Him who alone giveth us the victory.

Surely there must be some mistake about it when men call this entirely an unsuccessful war !

This, then, is the argument to show that God does not intend by these troubles utterly to destroy us. It is three-fold. In the first place, He has set at the head of this nation for this critical time, a thoroughly honest, and, in some respects, a very capable man. In the second place, He has delivered us again and again from the utmost national peril, always appearing for us just at the moment of our necessity. And in the third place, He has created for us an army and a navy, which have already won for themselves an imperishable renown, and which the crowned heads and Cabinet Ministers across the water regard with very serious attention. Now this, I say, does not look as if he intended presently to destroy us. It does not mean that. It means that He loves this nation and intends to save it ; and that He has sent our present afflictions upon us, not as a crushing judgment, or a mere retribution, but as a fatherly chastisement, under which we shall repent of our sins, and by which we shall be sanctified for the great mission upon which He has sent us forth. There is a "bright light" in the clouds, if men would see it. And golden skies will again shed their benedictions on this land. "The Lord reigneth." And though "in a little wrath He hid His face from us," He is saying to us by the very method of his chastening providence, "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

III. As there are Providential indications that our Republic is not to be destroyed by the calamity now upon us, so are there some reasons to suppose that we shall be very greatly benefited by it. I would not indeed, be too confident in such a statement, but if the conclusion that this rebellion is not intended to destroy us be valid, what is now affirmed would seem to follow without further argument. For when God sends a chastisement, and not a bare judgment upon men, He says Himself, that it is not for His own pleasure, but for our profit. And again He assures us that though "no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness *to them that are exercised thereby.*"

It has pleased God to send some of the greatest blessings upon the world which mankind now enjoy, in the chariot of war.

He has declared that He will make "the wrath of man to praise Him," and it is true that those things which we most highly prize on earth, and for which the gratitude of our hearts oftenest goes up to the great Father, have been heralded in by the rush of armies and the clash of arms. The introduction of Christianity itself was on this fashion: Alexander first conquering the world to give it a language in which to utter the spiritual thought of the New Testament, and the iron Romans coming after, to rivet the nations under one abiding sovereignty, which should hold them quiet till the heralds of the Cross could go forth and scatter upon the blood-soaked soil the good seed of the kingdom.

This general remark has been singularly illustrated in the great wars of our own country. This is a new continent yet, but we have already had upon it three eras of war previous to the present struggle. And in each of them God has sent a great blessing upon the land. First came the era of the Indian wars, opening with slight collisions between detached tribes and individual settlements, but gradually assuming more formidable proportions, until the aboriginal paganism of the continent was combined in one grand effort to exterminate all Christian civilization from these shores. These opposing elements were matched against each other in deadly strife, and more than once the advantage seemed to be with the savage. But God so ordered that here Christian civilization was maintained. And in those wars it was settled once for all that this magnificent heritage should pass into the hands of a people who would improve it, and plant upon it His church and kingdom. I know that wrongs were committed in those Indian wars, but as to the great issue now stated, the wrong was upon the head of the savage, and he accordingly went down.

Overlapping this earliest war era, and somewhat combining with it was a second struggle. The Christian civilization of this country was of two distinct types. First, the Protestant type, mostly imported from England, and under the protection of the British crown. Secondly, of the Romanist type, and claiming its chief affinity with France. And in what was called the old French war, these elements were seen struggling for the supremacy, as the savage and the white man had struggled before. The design of the French was not merely to maintain a foothold here, but to fling round behind the colonies a chain of military posts which should sweep the British rule completely from the continent. The

issue was again fairly made up. The struggle again was for life or death. And it ended as the previous struggle had done—in the supremacy of the righteous cause. God meant something better for this land than to plant upon it that type of civilization of which Mexico gives us an example; and in that old French war He settled it beyond recall, that in this country the Roman Catholic element should be always subordinate and subservient to the purer faith.

Our third war era is better understood, and needs less to be dwelt upon. Having given this good land into the possession of a Christian people of the Protestant type, it only remained to pronounce us of age and competent to the responsibilities of an independent nation. England doubted whether we were of age, or at least wanted our help a little longer in the family. But God said "Let my people go;" and they went, following "the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire," and passing a redder sea than that in which Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned.

Such have been the wars we have gone through. By the first, God took this glorious inheritance from the savage and gave it over into the possession of our fathers. By the second, he laid his hands upon that great religious despotism which had cursed the old world, and was blighting some of the fairest sections of the new, and said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." And by the third, he made us an independent nation; giving us a form of government, which, for ourselves, we claim to be the best the world has ever known. These are great blessings; and the price paid for them was great. And it would be but a continuance of the plan by which He wrought out for us these good things in the past, should the present struggle also conduct us to some great benefit, not otherwise to be attained.

It may seem premature to make any specific mention of such benefits while the contest is yet waging; for, as a general rule, God's providences can only be interpreted, after they have somewhat passed by. The bow in the cloud does not shine to those who are in the midst of the hail and thunder, but only to such as are privileged to behold it from a distance. Still on the supposition that we are to come out of our present troubles with benefit, it is not difficult to point out certain particulars in which that benefit will be manifest. Some such are indeed already quite visible.

1. We are learning some lessons of religion by this war. Days of tranquility have their dangers, which we are sometimes little aware of. And during the halcyon period from which we have just emerged, a whole brood of religious errors have insidiously crept in upon the public mind. One of these is, that in the Kingdom of God everything is governed by kindness. In some sense this doctrine is true, and therefore it is the more dangerous; for error, standing stark and alone, would never deceive the world. And in this case the falseness of the doctrine is scarcely observed, except in the application. But if God governs his kingdom only by kindness, what becomes of a large portion of his word, and what have we to do except to speak of his kindness to all mankind? So ran the beautiful theory, and it very naturally had growth at a time when there was nothing before us to give any vivid illustration of the necessity of vigorous measures in the administration of law. And even evangelical men were falling into it, and the sterner doctrines of the Bible were being as quietly dropped as the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was some years ago in New England; and the stamina and vigor of our Christianity were being endangered; and the bad influence was extending itself downward into the plane of the social moralities, misadjusting long-established and fundamental principles, and leaving us, instead of the Law and the Gospel of this grand old Book, a religion of suavities and sympathies, of lavender and rose-water and delicate perfumes.

Now the breaking out of this war has taught us some lessons on this subject not soon to be forgotten. We have seen what the exigencies of a mere earthly government may require, and can more easily understand what should be requisite in the great government of God. Lavender and rose-water are at a discount. The sympathies and suavities of a government toward rebels in arms against its authority, are, to use a current phrase, "about played out." We see, and have been made to feel in *all our bones*, that where insurrections occur, and especially where they become formidable, there is a demand, above all things, for a display of energy. And until the lesson we are learning, shall have lost its influence with us, one would say, that it should not seem impossible that in the administration of so wide a government as that of God, a rebel that remained incorrigible should be hurled down to absolute and hopeless ruin. With the necessities of this govern-

ment before us, as a type, and the astounding barbarity of this rebellion in mind, as a fact, the people of the land will be likely to feel that there is, or ought to be, somewhere in God's universe, such a place as Hell.

So are we also learning at the present time the importance of those nice distinctions of doctrine which are sometimes undervalued, the very names, Federal and Confederate, by which the warring sections are distinguished, embodying volumes of truth on the subject. The infidelity of this age, also, which has been so stoutly denying a God in human affairs, receives a shock from this war. God's people themselves are being strengthened and purified by the wrestlings and searchings of heart through which they have been passing. And the people of this land are learning, what it has sometimes seemed as if nothing could ever teach them, that God is the swift avenger of all such as are oppressed; and that no religion, however sound in doctrine or pleasant in experience, can pass with Him, unless there be united with it a practical righteousness between man and man. Thus is God tightening up the girdle that had begun to hang loose about His church in this land. And although it seems like an incongruous agency, war, by which to establish the gospel of peace, the Psalmist of old tells us, how "kings of armies do flee apace," when "God gave his word" to the great company that was to publish it. And if this war era shall be wound up by such an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, as followed immediately upon the Revolutionary struggle, and as even attended the old French war in 1740, religion will be established among us, more glorious in her purity, and settled more firmly in her power than ever before! "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

2. By this war God is making this nation strong. We have discovered how much we need to be strong by the attitude of foreign powers towards us since the beginning of our troubles. We could not have been made to believe, but for the experience we have had, that the European governments were regarding us with so unfriendly an eye. Dear old mother England, we particularly doted on. And when her heir apparent stepped upon our shores, we met him with demonstrations of cordiality, which rivaled even the greetings of his own people in a neighboring province. But this war has shown us that the crowned heads

and cabinet ministers of the old world have no love for us ; that they regard such a government as ours as a kind of disturbing cause in human affairs, to be removed and abated at the earliest opportunity ; and like the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem's calamity, they have not ceased, under the thin guise of neutrality, to cry out since this nation fell into these troubles, "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof!" And the most recent dispatches from across the sea reveal the fact that but for the reluctance of Russia, England and France would long since have been "actively coöperating" to render the present rebellion successful, and to prevent us from pushing on this war to a final restoration of the Union ! We have need to be strong !

And there have been among us hitherto some elements of weakness. The great breadth of our territory, and the ambition to extend it still further, the unparalleled heterogeneousness of our population, and that love of personal independence, which is our national passion, have been so many centrifugal forces among us, against which there has been no sufficient counterbalancing ; and the additional anomaly of a slave population has been a source of much division of sentiment among ourselves and the occasion of no little prejudice against us abroad. It was high time to check this territorial expansion. It was time to have these heterogeneous populations melted and run into one mold. It was time to turn the national passion in the direction of government and law. And it was time to do *something* with slavery. In order to be strong, we needed to be, in all these respects, more compact. And this war, under God, is making us so.

Territorial expansion we have mutually agreed to adjourn till after the war. Buying Cuba and filibustering in Central America are schemes not just now much talked of. Even the legitimate progress of emigration westward has been arrested ; the advance guard along the prairies and forests has halted, and the pickets, stretching away up into the country of the Sioux, have been driven in. For a good while to come this nation will probably be satisfied to retain what territory we now own, and to cultivate what soil we have now settled.

At the same time our diverse populations are being blended into one. Men who bear arms under the same banner, fight for the same country and cause, and mingle their blood on the same battle fields, will not long remember or care whether they were

born upon the banks of the Shannon or the Rhine, whether they first breathed the air of Europe or America. Cast into this glowing crucible, those elements of character which are worthiest in all the nations whence our population has come, will be fused together; and the dross, much of it, will be purged away. It is a settled ethnological law, that races of men are always invigorated by the infusion of new elements, provided they can be well assimilated; and as there never were so many new elements thrown in upon a race as have been thrown in upon this Anglo-American population, and are being molten into one mass in these fires, so if we only come safely out of it, will the Anglo-American character stand preëminent among the peoples of the earth. The new *Unum* to be here formed, like the Corinthian brass, which rivaled gold itself in its brilliancy, will be both stronger and more beautiful than any one of the original elements of which it was composed; and God will give it a casting into the sacred vessels and lofty pillars that shall garnish and support his own great temple among men.

As to our passion for individual independence, this rebellion has, in some sense, been a natural out-growth of it, even as this war is a reaction against it. For taking the principle of self-government, as it has been oftenest stated among us, we could neither have denied the right of a State to secede from the Nation, nor even an individual to secede from the State. The doctrine had grown too rank. Its roots were upheaving the foundations of all government. Its tendrils were piercing every seam and crevice in our constitution. It was time it received a wholesome pruning.

And God is giving it such a pruning by this war. The regard of our vast population is being rapidly centered upon the government. Individual institutions and state institutions are being solidly massed into that grand unit—the Nation. Secession, against which it was at first said we had no defence, though it was a very naughty thing, has been sifted, analyzed, stripped of its disguises, and by the united voice of the loyalty of the land, pronounced rebellion. And coercion,—that term against which there rose such a protest at the beginning of these troubles—has been studied, tried and tested by the best judicial talent of the country, and pronounced the administration of the laws of the land, according to oath of office. We have taken a lesson from a law higher than the constitution,—even the law of geo-

graphical necessity, and have found that the setting up of an independent government by any State, or combination of States, on this Union soil, could not be tolerated, even if we desired it. God made the land for the possession of one nation, and took the precaution that that nation should not be divided without destroying itself. The human frame itself is not more a unit, by virtue of its spinal column and its system of arteries, than this land is a unit by the mountain ranges that pass from North to South, and the mighty rivers that trench the earth in the same direction. That hand that built up the Alleghanies and scooped out the valley of the Mississippi, is lifted up with a perpetual menace against the dissolution of this Union.

It is astonishing how rapidly these lessons are being learned. And I can think of no sublimer spectacle than mere human history has ever presented, than the uprising of this people to fulfill this high purpose of God. And I take it as one reason why God has suffered us to feel sometimes that the government was not so energetic as it ought to be, and that our great military preparations were being frittered away for the want of executive purpose, is to cure us forever of our excessive jealousy of authority and law, to make us cry out in very agony for that vigorous and centralizing force which we had always despised, and to have us rivet these States together with bolts of steel.

And so has he done finally with the only other element of weakness among us,—negro slavery. For call slavery what you will,—a good to be cherished, or an evil to be got rid of, or a *tertium quid*, that is neither good nor bad,—one fact remains beyond contradiction. It has been the source of the widest division of sentiment, of the most rancorous bitterness of feeling, and of all that sectional jealousy which has culminated in the present state of affairs. Call it a sin for which God is visiting us, or call it only a watchword, cunningly employed by the leaders of the rebellion, or call it a sort of political windmill against which northern fanaticism has run the nation a-tilt,—here stands the fact before the world, the slave States of this Union, and no others, are in rebellion against the government, and the strength of that rebellion is graduated in each of these States precisely to the slave interest therein. Take your choice of the three theories—I take mine; but the facts are clear. By some means or other, slavery has been an element of division and discord, and so, of course, of

great weakness in this republic. And when slavery shall die, almost the last pretext will be annihilated, on which any portion of our population could be led to make war on the government of this land.

And slavery stands before us to-day smitten of the hand of destiny. From the very outset of these troubles there has been a steady friction and abrasion of that institution about the extremities. Even when our army formed, as some thought, a kind of police force, the more effectively to prevent the escape of fugitives, and to return them to their dear masters, it kept suffering. When the term *contraband* was brought out, a vein was opened from which it has ever since been bleeding. When emancipation was declared in the District of Columbia, a blow was dealt upon its head. The vigorous measures taken against the foreign slave trade, coupled with the state of things which, since the war broke out, has prevailed in Virginia, has measurably cut off its new supplies. And the President's proclamation of freedom has aimed a last stab at its heart. I do not pretend here to say whether all this has been according to the constitution or not—or even whether it has been right or not: some things are so mean, that I do not believe God will even let them be *killed* by any righteous measures. I only point you to facts. And in these facts I see the hand of Providence writing in characters that need no interpreter, across the iron wall of the slave's great prison-house in this land, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." Right or wrong, the institution is going to die. By fair means and constitutional means and wise means,—or by bad means and revolutionary means and dangerous means,—one or the other, God Almighty has struck the monster between its ten horns, and it is staggering in its blood! Even so, Amen, let it die! And let no one lament for it, saying, "Ah, my brother! or Ah, my sister! Ah, lord! or Ah, his glory," but let it be buried—"with the burial of an ass—drawn forth and cast beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

This nation needs to be strong; and the last great element of internal weakness is being destroyed. And coming out of this struggle with clean hands, and brave hearts, and a great army, we shall be ready to invite either England or France, or both at once, to come and talk over with us any little matters that may have gone wrong in the confusion of these times.

We must not consider it strange, that in order to accomplish these kind purposes toward us, the good Father should have passed us through a season of trial and alarm. Those blessings which cost little are never prized as they ought to be, and there is something in human nature which requires that in order to reap the greatest benefits, we should be made to struggle and to suffer and to wait. And they who understand this, and have observed the divine economy with man, can say, "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

I have sometimes stood, at a pleasanter season of the year than this, on one of the heights that overlook this green valley, and been deeply impressed with the scene of quiet loveliness before me. Yonder, great meadows lay outspread in their fatness. In another direction, orchards were in blossom, or bending beneath their mellow treasure. Here cattle were grazing along the moist pasture grounds. There, children were at play. In the midst of all stood the clustering homes of this beautiful city; and in the far distance, hill rising above hill in a broad emerald terrace-work, met and kissed the blue sky that was spread over us like the mantle of God.

Such a scene may be witnessed here now, on any pleasant summer day. But sixty years ago, this valley presented a different appearance. The primitive forests stood along these slopes and lowlands, striped here and there with jagged windfalls. The river went twisting through the miasmatic marshes like a green serpent crawling among the bogs and the rushes. And the scream of the panther and the whoop of the savage, gave accordant voice to the scene.

What made the change? What rescued these fields from that primitive roughness? What built these homes and paved these streets, and pierced this far interior country with the lines of a prosperous trade and travel? I answer, there had to be a war. Men came here and began a work of coercion. They laid at these forests with axe and fire. They tore up this soil with harrow and plow. Destruction and construction went hand in hand. Wild nature came under subjugation. And so far from revolting from the dominion as if her conquest had been her curse, every summer she now puts on some new robe of beauty, in which to present

herself to her lords, and yields up her treasures and her charms with a smile.

And such shall be the story which some gray haired patriarch shall tell to his sons sixty years hence concerning the troubles of this land. Standing beneath the folds of that starry flag, whose sacredness shall have been vindicated, surrounded by fruitful fields, teeming cities and gigantic thoroughfares, and beholding in the distance the ships of a commerce that vexes every sea, he shall say :

Once this scene was different from what you now behold. This flag was dishonored, this nation was trembling on the verge of ruin, and the foreign powers on whose friendship we had calculated, like the Jews at the Cross of our Savior, were shouting "Aha ! Aha !"

And when he is asked what made the change from those sad days when men could see no "bright light" in the clouds, to the golden sunshine that now bathes the hills and valleys of the land, he will answer :

There had to be a war. When the flag was dishonored there was one wild uprising to defend the constitution and the laws of which it was the symbol. There were giants in those days—men of renown—and they stood together, or fell side by side, nobly fighting for their native land. Brave mothers were there, who, with all the Spartan courage, sanctified and sustained by Christian faith, kissed their almost beardless boys when the times looked dark, and sent them forth. Old men brought down their trusty Revolutionary firelocks, and said to their grandsons, "Here, defend the liberties which we won for you at Bunker Hill and Saratoga, at Trenton and at Yorktown. Sisters and sweethearts plucked from their arms their brothers and lovers, and buckled on their sword-belts and said, "by all the love you bear us, and by the greater love of God, defend your native land." And they fought, and bore fatigues and delays that were more dangerous and more dreadful than fighting, and though it seemed at times as if everything were lost, they never gave up. They said to proud England and to ambitious France, "stand back," and they dared not cross the sea. They said to the rebellious States submit, and with the best grace possible they at length submitted. Along the northern curtain of that gloomy day, there shone a stripe of golden weather.



And the curtain lifted, and God smiled, and the soldiery cast down their implements of war, as something for which there was no more use, and the people fell upon their knees and whispered, "Victory, Peace and Praise."